DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 818 CS 507 056

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TITLE The Contributions of Speech Communication Scholarship to the Study of Terrorism: Review and Preview.
PUB DATE Mar 88
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Communication in Terrorist Events: Functions, Themes, and Consequences (Boston, MA, March 3-5, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; Foreign Countries; Mass Media Role; *News Media; Political Attitudes; Political Power; Research Design; Research Methodology; *Rhetoric; Rhetorical Criticism; *Speech Communication; *Terrorism
IDENTIFIERS *Media Coverage; Political Rhetoric; Rhetorical Theory

ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that existing research into terrorism shows great promise, this paper notes that, despite widespread recognition of terrorism's communicative dimensions, few studies have been done from within the discipline of speech communication. The paper defines the discipline of speech communication and rhetorical studies, reviews the few existing rhetorical studies of terrorism, and goes on to show the ways in which a rhetorical perspective would alter and improve research carried out from other perspectives. The paper concludes that the rhetorical perspective has much to offer the future interdisciplinary study of terrorist phenomena. A 119-item bibliography of basic sources in rhetoric and the rhetorical dimensions of terrorism is attached. (Author/SR)

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The Contributions of Speech Communication Scholarship to the Study of Terrorism:

Review and Preview

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Originally Presented to the Conference on
Communication in Terrorist Events:
Functions, Themes and Consequences
Boston, MA
March 3-5, 1988

CS507056

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The existing research into terrorism, though tentative and exploratory in many ways, shows great promise. However, despite widepsread recognition of its communicative dimensions, few studies have been done from within the discipline of speech communication. This essay defines the discipline of speech communication and rhetorical studies, reviews the few existing rhetorical studies of terrorism, and goes on to show the ways in which a rhetorical perspective woulod alter and improve research done from other perspectives. The paper concludes that the rhetorical perspective has much to offer the future interdisciplinary study of terrorist phenomena.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP TO THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND THE NEWS MEDIA:

Preview and Review

The discipline of speech communication is one of the oldest areas of academic study. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most misunderstood of the disciplines. Speech communication often is mistaken for speech pathology, telecommunications, or for "that department where they teach the delivery of speeches." My purpose in this paper is to clarify the identity of speech communication as a discipline, to explicate the role of rhetorical studies in the research plan of that discipline, to examine the contributions rhetorical scholars have made to the study of the communication dimensions of terrorism, to show how a rhetorical perspective could improve some of the existing research on terrorism employing other perspectives, and finally to attempt to develop a course for future research in terrorism from rhetorical and interdisciplinary perspectives. The paper also contains a fairly lengthy bibliography of basic sources in rhetoric and rhetorical dimensions of terrorism.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Avoiding the intra-disciplinary hair-splitting (and the profound philosophical differences that produce it), I choose to define speech communication as "the study of the uniquely human ability to use spoken language." This definition is at once broader and narrower than it appears. Narrower in that some human communication is not languaged, and hence excluded from the discipline. Broader in the sense that spoken language includes all of its derivatives, including what traditionally has been called

nonverbal communication (which truly is verbal but nonvocal), written communication (which is a derivative of spoken language), sign language (also a derivative of spoken language), and a variety of communication encounters most of us would not recognize immediately as involving language.[1]

Language is a systematized set of symbols. Language is involved whenever at least one person assigns symbolic meaning to the (in)action(s) of at least one other person, whether or not the other(s) intended any meaning to be assigned to their (in)action(s). Symbols are stimuli "having a learned, contextually flexible, arbitrary, and abstract meaning" (Dance and Larson 194). Hence, while terrorist incidents often involve no direct discourse being sent from the terrorists to any audience, terrorist actions are symbolic if the audience assigns meaning to them--and there is no doubt that many observers assign a great deal of meaning to terrorist actions.

Speech communication, then, involves the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and public communication. Speech communication involves the study of spoken, written, gestured, or other stimuli to which other humans assign symbolic meaning. Terrorism, and media coverage of it, then, clearly fall within the domain of speech communication. One purpose in writing this paper is to demonstrate that speech

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[1] Dance and Larson define verbal as those stimuli that are "dependent upon symbolic content for meaning," and nonverbal as those stimuli "not dependent on symbolic content for meaning." Vocal stimuli are those "produced by the vocal mechanism," while nonvocal refers to those stimuli "produced by other than the vocal mechanism" (194-95). Hence, communication stimuli can be either verbal-vocal (as in normal conversation), verbal-nonvocal (those behaviors often mislabeled "nonverbal"), nonverbal-vocal (as when an animal voices an instinctive warning sound), and nonverbal-nonvocal (as when a beaver slaps its tail to warn of impending danger). Terrorism, and other communicative phenomena, fall into the bailiwick of speech communication when they are verbal, whether vocal or not.

communication scholars--particularly rhetorical scholars--can make a unique contribution to understanding modern terrorism and media coverage of it. My purpose is not to argue that terrorism is the exclusive intellectual property of speech communication scholars, but, rather, that we can contribute to the interdisciplinary study of terrorism and the media.

RHETORICAL STUDIES

Within the discipline of speech communication are many specialties. The oldest of these specialties is the study of rhetoric. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (at 1355b). To the ancient Greeks in their burgeoning "democracy," the art of persuasion was an important one that had to be taught as soon as possible to a large number of men [sic]. Hence, the early study of rhetoric was pedagogically rather than theoretically oriented (Ehninger 132-34).

The modern misconceptions and distrust of rhetoric may, in fact, be traced to Plato's early objections to the atheoretical approach taken by the popular and prosperous teachers of rhetoric endemic to ancient Athens (Gorgias, Phaedrus). Plato's most significant and long-lasting criticisms were that rhetoric, as practiced by the much-maligned Sophists, was a mere knack for flattery that could not be taught, was not based upon any principles, and was ethically suspect when practiced by anyone other than a philosopher trained in the discovery of truth.

"When we hear the word 'rhetoric' used today, the meaning frequently is pejorative. More often than not it refers to talk without actions, empty words with no substance, or flowery, ornamental speech" (Foss, Foss and Trapp 1). This situation may be attributable in part to Plato's criticisms, although the blame surely must be shared by those

practitioners and teachers of rhetoric who have misused it for questionable ends--and there has been no shortage of such rhetors.

Modern scholars of rhetoric, however, have studied rhetoric rather than abusing it. The study of rhetoric is one of the most essential areas in the discipline of speech communication--perhaps the most essential. The centrality of rhetoric to the discipline is obvious if we accept some of the definitions of rhetoric that have been offered. Foss, Foss and Trapp, for example, define rhetoric as "the uniquely human ability to use symbols to communicate with one another" (11). This definition is virtually identical with my definition of speech communication.[2] Burke has defined rhetoric as "the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents." He also has argued that rhetoric is "rooted in an essential function of language itself, . . . the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature use symbols" (A Rhetoric 41-43). These definitions are both theoretically consistent and similar in breadth to my own definitions. The central term in the rhetorical perspective on communication is the term "influence." The intentional use of symbolic means to influence others is the paradigm case of rhetorical communication and the central focus of rhetorical studies. The influence need not be intentional/conscious, and may involve pleasing, informing, persuading, moving, or otherwise altering the cognitions, emotions, or behavior of others. The purpose of rhetorical studies is to appreciate rhetorical acts, as well as to discover enduring principles that will allow us to understand, predict, and/or

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[2] Foss, Foss and Trapp admit that their definition of rhetoric is "essentially synonymous" with the field of communication itself. They report this is "a position not uncommon in the discipline of speech communication" and cite several authorities to defend the latter conclusion (11).

control when, how, and why people influence one another through symbolic communication.

RHETORICAL CRITICISM

The rhetorical scholar has at his/her disposal a variety of research approaches and methodologies to aid in achieving these purposes. Among these are the empirical and experimental methods of collecting quantitative data so familiar within the social sciences. My preference, and that of many rhetorical scholars, is for the collection and analysis of qualitative data known as rhetorical criticism.

Rhetorical criticism is a methodology in which a critic-observer engages rhetorical phenomena with an eye toward describing, analyzing, and judging/evaluating those phenomena from a rhetorical perspective (Brock and Scott 19; Campbell, Critiques 13-23). Rosenfield argues that criticism is "most sensibly conceived of as a special form of reason-giving discourse" (148). Criticism, Black concludes, is "the process by which, through the medium of language, a private attitude becomes a public faith" (177; qtd. in Brock and Scott, 139). As this last statement makes clear, the rhetorical critic is in the unique business of using language to study language and of using language to report his/her findings (Rosenfield 151).

The critic, and his/her arguments, are the test of "validity" for critical inquiry. The standard of validity is not "objectivity," but, rather, "intersubjectivity." The acceptability of a critic's arguments to peers usually will determine the worth of a critical analysis, although other criteria are available. (Brockriede; Foss). For example, a critic who offers a generalization about some class of rhetorical acts can have his/her generalization empirically tested by later critical or social-scientific methods.

Criticism is a method that can be used both to generate new hypotheses and to test existing hypotheses. Since s/he acts as the measurement device, the rhetorical critic must be careful to adopt a proper critical perspective. The critical perspective involves the critic acting as an expert observer who is seeking to describe, analyze, and evaluate rhetorical phenomena so that others can gain insights into their causes, effects, and relationships to other phenomena.

Adopting the critical stance, however, is only the first step. The critic must then select a method of criticism that provides the greatest insight into the phenomena being examined. There are so many methods of rhetorical criticism available that they can be categorized into groups of similar methods. In Methods of Rhetorical Criticism, Brock and Scott identify a traditional perspective, an experiential perspective, a "new rhetorics" perspective, and a meta-critical perspective. The traditional perspective includes both the neo-Aristotelian and historical approaches. The experiential includes the eclectic and social reality approaches. The "new rhetorics" includes the language-action and dramatistic approaches. The meta-critical perspective contains the generic and movements approaches. In turn, each of these approaches may be done in several different ways.

The critic's selection of method will be determined by the nature of the rhetorical acts being examined and the kinds of research questions s/he is asking. Each method has different strengths and weaknesses that determine which acts it most and least illuminates and which kinds of research questions it is suited to answering.

In sum, then, there are a variety of methods of rhetorical criticism that may be used by the rhetorical scholar. The rhetorical scholar can select either critical or social-scientific

methods of inquiry as s/he examines the ways in which human beings use symbols to influence one another. This uniquely human ability to use linguistic symbols defines the range/domain of the discipline of speech communication within which rhetorical studies are located.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM TO THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND THE MEDIA: A REVIEW

A number of critics have examined single or multiple terrorist actions with the intent of answering a variety of research questions. The variety of their questions has moved these scholars to apply an equal variety of critical methodologies. I will review a number of these studies.

Conquergood was interested in explaining the reasons for the widespread American public and media preoccupation with Iran (which seemed out of line with the concern shown for seemingly similar world events), the prevalent condemnation of Iran and Iranians, the growth of American national unity, and the ubiquitous bestowing of praise upon the hostages.

In an excellent instance of the eclectic approach to criticism, Conquergood chose cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of social drama to examine and explain the causes of such obsession, condemnation, national unity, and lauding of the hostages as heroes. Turner's theory defines man as a creature, homo histrio, who "innately performs and enacts dramas" (Conquergood 2). The social drama,in Turner's theory, involves four distinct stages: breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or recognition of permanent schism (Turner, "Dramatic Ritual" 83).

Turner believes the social drama to be an innate and universal form of human communicative behavior. The Iranian hostage crisis saw Americans enacting all four stages of the social drama. The behaviors Conquergood sought to explain, then, were understandable as particular enactments of a universal form of human social behavior. Hence, human nature--which is responsible for the universal form--is the root cause and explanation for the observed obsession, condemnation, national unity, and lauding of the hostages. Conquergood also used Turner's theory to explain Americans' continuing inability to understand Iran, either as an isolated case or as a specific instance of our policies toward similar nations (Conquergood 14-15).

Decker and Rainey have examined the full range of potential contributions of speech communication scholars to the study of terrorism and terrorism and the media ("Terrorism as Communication"). They have listed a number of useful areas of inquiry for speech communication scholars, notably in giving advice on negotiating with terrorists and in advising governments in how to handle their crisis communication during terrorist incidents (8-9). Decker and Rainey suggest in this paper that communication scholars can assist in the understanding of terrorism in six areas: "1) mass communication, 2) applied communication, 3) small group/interpersonal communication, 4) rhetoric, 5) intercultural communication, and 6) the ethics of communication" (3). They suggest a number of fruitful lines of inquiry within each of these six areas, as well as critiquing the lack of serious communication scholarship in the field (4-11).

In this same paper, Decker and Rainey touch on an interesting rhetorical implication of terrorism. After arguing that terrorism is an attempt by terrorists to win ideological converts, they suggest that offering terrorists free access to the media might

reduce their proclivity to commit violent deeds to gain such access (3). Dowling has argued that this claim reflects a misunderstanding of the rhetorical purposes of terrorist violence, flies in the face of logic, and would not reduce the terrorists' motive to commit violence ("Terrorism and the Media" 15, 22-23; "The Rhetorical Genre" 6-8, 19-20).

In a later paper, Decker and Rainey begin by criticizing much of the existing scholarship in terrorism and the media for uncritically accepting the notion that the role of the media is to serve as a conduit for terrorist messages to the mass audience ("Media and Terrorism"). Decker and Rainey go on to argue that such research is based on "assumptions about why media coverage ought to beget more terrorism or ought to play to the needs of the terrorist, but not upon any research which indicates that media coverage does anything positive for the terrorist" (6).

To correct these deficiencies, Decker and Rainey utilize content analysis (a standard tool of rhetorical criticism) to code the contents of news media coverage of acts of terrorism into twenty-seven categories (10-12). The results of this content analysis are then used as evidence to rebut or challenge some of the common unsubstantiated claims made in other such research.

In response to the claim that media provide terrorists the opportunity to present their case to the public, Decker and Rainey present evidence for their conclusion that "the terrorist is not always assured that the cause will be explained in any detail, or that any sympathetic education of the audience will take place" (13). To assertions that the media glamorize terrorists and terrorism, they present evidence that the "coverage in general will not be even-handed and simply informative" (13). In fact, the coverage was mostly neutral, with some negative toward the terrorists. For claims of widespread media

sensationalizing and glorification of terrorism, Decker and Rainey found no supporting evidence (14-15). Decker and Rainey summarized the relevant evidence in this way:

> Statements which boldly assert that media coverage provides desired publicity for the terrorist, or that the media stage is the carrot enticing terrorists to engage in more activity, or that terrorists' causes are fully and sympathetically explained by the media, are at best not descriptive and at worst misleading (16).

Decker and Rainey suggest that at least part of the blame for such errors in the existing research lies in overgeneralizing from a few memorable and, perhaps, atypical incidents. Decker and Rainey analyzed the coverage of the Hanafi Muslim takeover of three buildings in Washington and the Black September killings at the Munich Olympics in the New York Times and Washington Post, and proved, at the very least, that important exceptions must be made to some of the frequently offered generalizations about terrorism coverage. Ultimately, they call for less generalizing and greater awareness of the situational variability of terrorism and its coverage. In their words, "The specific event, the specific location, the specific time, and the specific audience will determine how the coverage influences the terrorist and the audience. To date, too little of the 'research' on terrorism reflects this complexity" (17).

DeSousa conducted a rhetorical analysis of American editorial cartoons referring to the Iranian hostage incident in order to determine whether or not the cartoon form resulted in oversimplification and cultural bias. DeSousa found that the cartoons--which by nature did rely on cultural stereotypes and commonplaces to communicate--revealed a pro-U.S. and anti-Iranian cultural bias.

Typical of the oversimplification and bias DeSousa found were depictions of Khomeini in editorial cartoons. Khomeini repeatedly was depicted as a "clever manipulator of the media," and as the intentional "degrader or humiliator of the U.S." (DeSousa 7-8).

Further, DeSousa found "the attribution of madness or insanity" to Khomeini common in the cartoons, and found ageism in as the cartoons communicated his madness by linking it to his advanced age (8-9). Finally, Khomeini was depicted as a "hypocrite or false spiritual leader" (10).

DeSousa also noted a refusal to deal with the issues of the Shah's presence in the U.S. or his years of rule as a partial surrogate for U.S. interests. DeSousa coupled this observation with the portrayals of Khomeini to conclude that the cartoonists' cultural biases may have contributed greatly to the growing American sense of unity that occurred during the holding of the hostages. DeSousa did not explore the relationship between this growing sense of unity and American policy (a question that should be answered only with the assistance of political scientists), but he did suggest that the cartoons may have allowed Americans a verbal outlet for hostilities toward Iran, thereby reducing the chances that violence would be enacted against Iran or some other hapless party that happened to anger Americans at an inauspicious moment (although some have suggested that the latter was the case with Grenada).

In two different papers, Dowling has used the meta-critical genre approach to analyze terrorism and its coverage ("Terrorism and the Media"; "The Rhetorical Genre"). Dowling claims that the violence of what Hacker has called "crusader" terrorists is most worth studying from a rhetorical perspective, and then proceeds to argue that the most effective terrorist violence of these crusaders constitutes its own rhetorical genre.

A rhetorical genre exists when several rhetorical acts possess similar characteristics (or "forms) which, in turn, are the result of situational demands and constraints which make these repetitive forms appropriate to the purposes of the rhetors and the situation

in which they find themselves (Campbell and Jamieson 19, 21). These situational constraints, when understood, make the forms of such rhetoric predictable once the genre has been identified and its workings have been examined. The study of genres and forms allows the generation and testing of hypotheses about genres, about rhetoric as a whole, and about human communication itself.

The modern media terrorist faces severe situational constraints. S/he is without power, yet seeks the kinds of change that only power can bring about. S/he is ideologically opposed to the use of institutional routes to change because the change s/he seeks is revolutionary, not evolutionary. S/he lacks the ability to use violence in its decisive war-making form. And, like all those who stage what Boorstin has called "pseudo-events," they want access to mass media that cost more to use than they can afford to pay.

The modern terrorist seeks access through the only free means of obtaining media exposure--the staging of "news." To assure both newsworthiness and maximum exposure, the successful terrorist will stage an event that contains the three forms of what Bell has called the "terrorist spectacular." Proper location, violence or the prospect of violence, and movement over time assure maximum access for the terrorist, and Dowling argues that the most memorable media-saturated terrorist incidents have used all three forms (48-49; Dowling, "Terrorism and the Media" 13-15).

Access is not an end in itself. If terrorist violence did not send some kind of messages to different audiences, access would serve no purposes. Dowling argues that scholars often have failed to understand terrorism because they have failed to examine carefully the messages sent and the different audiences reached by terrorism. The

purposes of terrorism are rhetorical--the violence is intended to send a message. Violence is not used to get access so that discourse can be presented--violence gets access and sends its own important messages to both mediated and non-mediated audiences.

Dowling argues that terrorists do not seek to convert members of the mass audience to their ideologies. The negative ethos resulting from the violent victimization of innocents and the vast distance between the alien ideologies of the terrorists and those of the American audience would suffice to preclude any such persuasion. Further, even a cursory examination reveals that terrorists rarely ask for (and even less often receive) media time/space to present their views persuasively. Terrorism, then, must serve other communicative purposes.

Scholars often have overlooked the possibility that the violent deeds of terrorists are intended to communicate to audiences not reached through the media. The audience of "insiders" (members of the terrorist network and their supporters) are made privy to the deeds of the terrorists through participation in planning and word of mouth (although they doubtless follow the exploits of their peers in the media). Just as the nature of the violence makes terrorism newsworthy and provides access to the media, the nature of violence sends messages to these "insiders."

Dowling cites Scott and Smith's argument that discontented people who practice the rhetoric of confrontation--by confronting authorities with superior power--do so in order to persuade themselves. These confronters want to convince themselves and their peers that "we can act" on events, that "we do act," and that "we are worthy" to carry the banner for this noble cause (Dowling, "Terrorism and the Media" 16-17; Scott and Smith 4). The terrorists convince themselves that they are worthy and potent and that they are

not the cowards, criminals, or crazies the authorities make them out to be in official rhetoric. They do so by enacting dramas of daring, sacrifice, and skill that stymie the efforts of the authorities to restore order. And, importantly, Dowling notes, these messages are sent by violence, but do not require media coverage to reach the intended audience.

Scholars and terrorist strategists alike have argued that violence is used tc communicate with governments who oppose or might be in a position to help the terrorists (excluding, for now, the extortion of demands). Again, media coverage is not essential to such a rhetorical purpose, because governments have their own sources of information on terrorist actions which can be assured of being aware of the terrorists' deeds if terrorists simply select targets intelligently.

Dowling also argues that terrorists use violence to send messages through the media to "outsiders" as well--the mass audience. Terrorists first seek to make the masses aware of their existence. This awareness is best enhanced by adherence to the three forms of the terrorist genre ("Terrorism and the Media" 17; Jenkins, "International Terrorism" 59-60). Terrorists also use violence to convince the mass audience that they are credible terrorists capable of doing real harm and of provoking real fear (Weisband and Roguly 278-79). This provocation is intended to produce repression by authorities that eventually will lead to the destruction of society as it exists (Dobson and Payne 208; Marighella 104-05).

Terrorism also is an opportunity, Dowling argues, for the terrorists to provoke authorities into showing the mass audience "how ugly you really are" when pushed. Scott and Smith see this as a standard strategy of confrontational rhetors, and ABC News ("The

Unholy War") has suggested that the Palestinians have attempted, perhaps successfully, to provoke Israel into counter-terrorist strikes morally indistinguishable from the condemned deeds of the terrorists themselves.

Terrorism for the most part has proven to be a failure in provoking enough fear to create the conditions necessary for the destruction of society. Dowling has argued that this results from poor audience analysis by the terrorists and from the entertainment/literary form in which media news is packaged ("Terrorism and the Media" 20-22; Sperry; Sloan). Terrorism, then, succeeds only in conveying messages to insiders. Ironically, the much-decried media coverage may be no more than an unfortunate and annoying side-effect of violence that primarily serves rhetorical purposes with a non-mediated audience of insiders.

In light of these observations, Dowling suggests that there is no evidence to believe that voluntary media restraint on terrorism coverage, free access to media for terrorists, or contextual coverage would have appreciable impact on the frequency or nature of terrorist violence. The reasoning of those who advocate these popular "solutions" is weakened by their failure to come to grips with rhetorical variables central to a complete understanding of the terrorist phenomena (22-23).

In another study, Dowling applies Bormann's fantasy theme method of analysis to the criticism of American newspaper and newsmagazine coverage of the Iranian hostage incident (Dowling, "Rhetorical Vision"; Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" and ". . . Ten Years Later"). Bormann's fantasy theme approach to criticism falls within the dramatistic school of criticism, and is especially useful for determining the motives of social actors who share what he calls "rhetorical visions."

Rhetorical visions are coherent views of reality that make the world understandable to the social actors who share them. Rhetorical visions are not fantasies in the everyday sense of the term. Rather, they are the socially created mythic realities of those who share them, and analyzing them can explain why their adherents behave as they do.

Dowling found two complete rhetorical visions shared in the news media, the two differing only in their portrayals of President Carter and his policies. The major antagonist in these visions was the Ayatollah Khomeini--an irrational, insane lying, hypocritical, sadistic, vengeance-seeking dictator. This old and dying sick man was a spiritually bankrupt tool of the devil merely posing as a religious leader while selfishly seeking political gain. Khomeini's henchmen in this drama included Rajai, the pathetically inept President of Iran; Beheshti, Khalkhali and their ilk, shrewd politicians posing as religious leaders; Ghotbzadeh, the Westernized sophisticate foreign minister who by contrast showed the naivete of his peers; and Bani-Sadr, a flexible moderate among the fanatic opportunists who might have helped obtain a release of the hostages had he not lost his power in an internal political struggle with fundamentalists.

The protagonist in the drama was President Carter. One vision (which Dowling called the "liberal") saw him as a good, strong, firm leader who showed admirable restraint, unselfishness, humanitarianism, and concern for the hostages. This Carter was a Christian and a man willing to take responsibility for his actions. The "conservative" vision saw Carter as a weak and ineffective leader whose policies reflected selfish political considerations. In this vision the hero's mantle was worn by Warren Christopher, the super diplomat who was forced to take on the heroic lead denied the President who left office with hostages still being held in Iran. In both visions, the hostages were supported

by the American people--a united and special brand of Christian people universally concerned with the fate of the hostages--and the brave, competent, all-volunteer military rescue team sent to release them. The hostages themselves played a brief cameo role as the brave, loyal Americans who were mentally tough enough to keep their senses of humor through their long captivity.

These character themes were consistent with the portrayals of the settings within which the drama occurred. One important setting in Dowling's reconstruction of the visions was Iran--the profane ground of the drama. Iran was a bizarre place where events could not be predicted, where anything was possible, and where primitiveness reigned over modernity. Iran's government was inept, chaotic, on the verge of collapse, and the nation itself was wracked by every conceivable form of internal conflict and threatened internally and externally by Soviet subversion and aggression. The sacred ground was America--a land of laws rather than of men [sic], and a land of unity (both of which contrasted markedly with the dictatorship and internal conflict in Iran).

These two settings were found within the world setting--which greatly influenced the meaning Americans attributed to the entire incident. The world, formerly an orderly place under U.S. domination/control, rapidly was becoming less controllable as both chaos (in the form of growing Third World nationalism) and evil (in the form of Soviet adventurism) increased. In this zero-sum game for world domination, both evil and chaos expand whenever America is seen as lacking in the power or will to oppose them.

The major action in the drama was the seizure of the hostages--a criminal act, an unprovoked act of war condemned by one and all. The seizure was a violation of Islam and Christianity that was unspeakably cruel to the hostages, their families, the American

public, and Jimmy Carter. Further, the seizure was without any hint of justification since it was done for political gain and without principled foundation. The seizure also was a humiliation to the U.S., and the humiliation increased as the incident dragged on (particularly after the humiliating failure of the military rescue mission).

The coverage portrayed American and Iranian behaviors and policies during the seizure in ways consistent with the portrayals of the nations and national leaders already summarized. Dowling found that these portrayals--like those of the characters and settings--were not substantially different in supposedly "objective" news coverage than they were in obviously "subjective" editorials, editorial cartoons, and letters to the editor.

Dowling used these reconstructed rhetorical visions to explain the motives for the obsessive behaviors of journalists and the American public during the hostage seizure, and to explore the relationship of the behaviors and the news coverage. More importantly, the rhetorical visions are interesting from a policy perspective. If policy is made by leaders who share visions of a U.S. national character and the need to remove some imagined national humiliation, it bodes ill for rational decision making in dealing with terrorism. Also, if politicians' choices are limited by public sharing of such visions (this is where political science comes in), then we must analyze this influence and implement political and/or rhetorical solutions to open up the maximum number of effective policy options.

Dowling has conducted two other analyses of the American coverage of the Iranian hostage incident, one utilizing Burke's dramatistic pentad as the analytical tool, and the other applying Bitzer's notion of the rhetorical situation ("A Multi-Pentadic"; "The Iranian Hostage Incident"). The former found in the coverage a rhetorical explanation for America's inability to understand, and hence to communicate with, the Iranians. The latter

provides evidence that Carter made a rhetorical error in the first few hours of the incident that irreversibly constrained his future rhetorical choices in dealing with Iran. The paper argues that Carter would have been better off handling the Iran situation in a subdued manner like President Johnson's handling of the seizure of the U.S.S. Pueblo.

This analysis supports Arthur Schlesinger's analysis. Schlesinger reports that President Johnson "instructed his Administration to downplay the incident," thus not permitting "their plight to obsess and haunt his Government." The result, Schlesinger asserts, was that "life went on much as usual in the United States" for the eleven months the Pueblo was held and Johnson did not "allow the Government to become itself a North Korean prisoner. In contrast, Carter's handling of the Iran situation led to a litany of "'day one . . . day 30 . . . day 300' on television" and to Carter allowing "the prisoners to dominate his last year as President." Schlesinger put it this way:

> Jimmy Carter . . . permitted the hostages to become the constant concern for his whole Administration. He played up the crisis and TV readily cooperated. All this gave great satisfaction to the Iranians. He used the hostages in his campaign for renomination. He allowed their plight to dominate his last year as President and, in effect, made the Government itself hostage to Iran.

Schlesinger offered his comparative analysis of the Pueblo and Iranian hostage incidents in order to offer the following warning/advice to the Reagan Administration as it attempted to deal with the seizure of TWA flight 847: "As the media glare intensifies and the crisis protracts, the plight of the Trans World Airlines hostages will increasingly obsess and haunt the Reagan Administration. Its ability to address other issues will wither. . . . The government itself will become a Shiite hostage too."

Hauser has twice utilized Habermas' notion of the "public sphere" to analyze the Carter Administration's rhetorical efforts to deal with the Iranian situation as a foreign crisis

and a domestic political problem. In both papers Hauser sought to explain why, for "444 days Americans sat as captive audience to the humiliating spectacle of a small, unstable nation demonstrating once more the serious limitations to the United States' power" ("Setting Foreign Policy" 2). He also wondered why the Iran hostages were "given heroic treatment when those held captive in the Pueblo and Myaguez [sic] incidents were not" ("Discussing the Iranian Hostages" 7)?

Habermas' "public sphere" is a hypothetical construct which he says must exist if public opinion is to have any real influence in a free society. A properly functioning public sphere requires access for all citizens, government assurances of public access to appropriate information, and a "space" or place which provides public actors an audience for their views. Distortions of these three characteristics limits the influence of public opinion on public policy.

In his earlier study, Hauser found the answer to his research question in three rhetorical strategies of the Carter Administration that impacted on the public sphere. First, the Administration went "out of its way to impress upon the American public that this was a matter of preeminent significance." Second, Carter "attempted management of the topics admitted into the public sphere," as well as the information available, thus distorting the public sphere and enhancing the image of the terrorists as heroes. Third, "the public sphere was distorted in ways that contributed greatly to the perceptions of the hostages as heroes. These latter distortions included inflammatory depictions of the Iranians and the hostage taking as well as repeated critical questioning of the Iranians' true motives ("Discussing the Iranian Hostages" 7, 10, 16-17).

In his subsequent analysis Hauser identified three major characteristics of the Administration's rhetoric. First, it "placed this incident within the framework of the public sphere and made it salient matter for public opinion" (5). Secondly, it "elevated the hostage affair to the center of American foreign policy" (5). Thirdly, Hauser identifies Carter's "insistence upon the exclusive right of his Administration to address the matter" (6).

Apart from the ethical and policy implications of these distortions of the public sphere, Hauser concluded that these strategies created three significant rhetorical problems for Carter.

> 1. By bringing the hostage matter before the public and sustaining it there, the President inescapably invited discussion of the measures he was enacting to secure their release (7).
>
> 2. By projecting the hostages as the central concern of American policy, Carter invited problems from both Iranian and domestic audiences (8).
>
> 3. By appropriating the crisis unto himself, Carter created the public impression that he alone had the power to resolve it (9).

In summary, Hauser found an ethnocentric effect from Carter's rhetorical distortions of the public sphere that might well have hampered the public's ability to understand and evaluate the events in Iran and U.S. policy in response to them. This is hardly the ideal state of affairs in a nation that relies on the wisdom of the majority to govern itself. Hauser described the effect this way:

> While the actions of the Iranian militants remain inexcusable, that does not remove the false consciousness Americans possessed. Americans saw the issue as the illegal detention of the hostages, not the repressive regime of the Shah; as the violation of international law by Iran, not the historical pattern of illegal intrusions by the United States into Iranian affairs. In brief, the whole affair was reduced, first to an American perspective, and second to an American president's perspective since the White House effectively silenced all other voices as the President wrapped himself in the flag at the slightest hint of criticism (11).

Holmberg's study of "Rhetorical Terrorism" had the most ambitious goal of the rhetorical analyses I have examined. For Holmberg, "The ultimate utility of discussing the . . . arts of torture and terrorism lies in the fact that the discussion can suggest counter-arts" (1). Holmberg begins by identifying the prominent characteristics of what he calls rhetorical terrorism:

> There appear to be at least three interrelated factors in rhetorical terror: (1) it produces systematic, wide-ranging effects as well as specific goals. (2) It is used both for audience analysis and for adaptive persuasion. (3) It is a sensational rhetoric for (a) selecting and practicing terror crafted to be most meaningful culturally and interculturally, (b) selecting and targeting the human faculties most susceptible to terror culturally or interculturally, and (c) selecting media which are culturally or interculturally preferred by and accessible to the audience of the terror (5).

The search for rhetorical counter-arts to terrorism, Holmberg argues, is hampered by two considerations. First, the media provide terrorists with access to all levels and segments of America, while the U.S. has no such access due to the limited distribution and/or governmental control of mass media in the home nations of many terrorists and their supporters. Second, an effective counter-terrorist rhetoric would have to attract the attention of terrorists soon enough to be prophylactic rather than remedial.

While Holmberg's quest for a rhetorical counter-art to terrorism remains a dream, the notion that a rhetorical problem may lend itself to a rhetorical solution seems intuitively sound. Political problems are solved politically, economic problems are solved with economic measures, and law enforcement problems are often solved by law enforcement measures. Astute readers are thinking that my analysis is simplistic since one can hardly implement any one of these solutions in isolation from the others. A law enforcement measure is implemented through political processes, requires certain economic

conditions, and produces intended and unintended political, economic, law enforcement, and other effects.

I am arguing here for an interdisciplinary approach to terrorism research that adds the insights of rhetorical critics to those of scholars in mass communication, journalism, law enforcement, law, international relations, political science, sociology, psychology, and other disciplines.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM: A PREVIEW

The kinds of insights I have reviewed thus far are insights not readily apparent or available to scholars utilizing the methods and perspectives of other disciplines. It remains only for an ongoing dialogue among diverse scholars for these insights to be matched with those gained within other approaches, perspectives, and disciplines.

For the remainder of this paper I would like to briefly present some original insights that could be provided by allowing a rhetorical critic to look at some of the data and analyses found in studies of terrorism conducted in other disciplines. The paper has already gone too long and I will not be presenting the original critical analysis I had planned, but I would like to at least tease you with a peek at the insights available.

Atwater has analyzed the coverage of the seizure of TWA flight 847 on the NBC Nightly News and, in a separate study, on all of the major networks' news ("Terrorism on the Evening News"; "Network Evening News"). Atwater meticulously counted the number of stories, percentage of stories, and types of stories on the incident. Such studies are useful, but a rhetorical scholar would be more interested in applying rhetorical

theory to understand the influence of story quantity, placement, type, form, and other variables on the news audience. This would be the rhetorical scholar's contribution, along with suggestions as to the proper data to collect to maximize our ability to predict this influence.

Elliott has conducted an exhaustive analysis of newspaper and television coverage of the hijacking of flight 847, and combined it with interviews of fifty-eight principals, including government officials, hostages, hostage family members, and journalists and executives from print and electronic media. Elliott's report of the events themselves, their coverage, and the principals' perceptions of them is informative, but fails to use the 847 incident to draw any generalizable conclusions or to test any hypotheses. A rhetorical scholar would want to examine the coverage and the perceptions and compare and contrast them and to seek a rhetorical explanation for the similarities and differences. Elliott's data, which was not collected for this purpose, limits our ability to do this.

Falk has reported a seeming anomaly in the results of a Newsweek poll regarding President Reagan's decision to bomb Libya, ostensibly to punish past terrorism and to deter future terrorism. Although 71% of those polled said they supported Reagan's decision, only 31% believed the raid would reduce terrorism. 39% thought the raid would increase terrorism. Americans apparently support strong anti-terrorist measures regardless of whether or not they believe the measures will be effective. Dowling's research explains how mediated rhetoric influences Americans to perceive terrorism as an affront to national and personal dignity and how such affronts motivate the audience to act to redress the humiliation ("Rhetorical Vision"). Burke's notions of scapegoating and victimage would explain the important social functions served by punishing terrorists.

Falk's conclusion is that "society's demand for a response becomes irresistible" and "punitive military action immensely popular even when people believe that it will incite additional attacks," but he lacks the rhetorical insights that explain the source of the public "fear, frustration and rage" that lead to this condition (887-88). Falk can describe and regret the anomaly, but without the rhetorical perspective he is powerless to explain it or to suggest ways to alter this regrettable tendency to turn to violence that may exacerbate the problem it ostensibly is used to solve. Falk instead attributes imperialist motives to Reagan and treats the public as if it were a human entity with a single national psychology (890).

Goldman's research asserts that media terrorism arose to provide terrorists with an efficient "dissemination of their philosophies." Goldman seems to ignore the messages sent by the violence itself regardless of media coverage, the fact that terrorist violence sends messages not convincing when delivered discursively, and the fact that the audiences reached by mediated terrorism are unlikely to be persuaded to accept the totally alien ideologies of the sadistic killers of innocents (Dowling, "Terrorism and the Media").

Goldman does present a rhetorically interesting claim. He claims that television coverage tends to make the network news departments appear to be more in control of events than the governmental authorities in a terrorist incident. However, Goldman offers no specific rhetorical-theoretical constructs to explain this hypothesis and fails to test it with either critical or social-scientific methods.

Lule examined the New York Times' coverage of the Achille Lauro hijacking using Burke's dramatistic method in order to discover if it had a mythic dimension. Lule found

a mythic dimension to the coverage and argued that this use of myth had three effects. First, the Times' portrayal of Leon Klinghoffer invited Americans to identify personally with him. The Times' portrayal of government officials as they dealt with Klinghoffer's widow also helped the public to identify with Klinghoffer. Finally, Lule suggests that this intense public identification with victims might allow policy-makers to justify policy decisions such as the bombing of Libya that shortly followed the Achille Lauro hijacking. The testing of this final effect would require the assistance of experts in public opinion and political science.

Lule's suggestion that identification with victims (which is encouraged by media coverage) creates opportunities for strong-arm tactics by policy makers remains an untested hypothesis. However, testing it seems particularly worthwhile since it contrasts with (but does not contradict) the repeated complaints of law enforcement authorities, government officials, and other critics that the "personal touch" provided by intense media coverage limits the options of policy makers to "soft" alternatives that do not endanger hostages.

Picard has examined ten days of coverage of nine major terrorist incidents in the Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Washington Post, and all three major networks' news ("Stages of Coverage"). He tested eight hypotheses regarding terrorism and the media frequently asserted to be true, and rejected seven of them. Rhetorical critics could help explain why so many observers complain about television overplaying terrorism when compared to print media when the study clearly showed this was not the case. The forms of coverage, language practices, forms of presentation, audiences, or other variables unique to each medium might create this perception.

Picard also rejected the hypothesis that coverage of the incident itself would be predominant because he found that government-related stories predominated. Again, rhetorical explanations for the misperception that coverage focuses on the incident rather than on responses would seem in order. Picard's inference that this predominance "proves" to audiences that terrorism affects government deserves empirical testing through methods common in rhetorical studies. Since there is evidence suggesting that authorities and public alike tend to exaggerate the extent of the terrorist threat, a test of this hypothesis and a political scientist's assistance in determining the eventual effect of such a perception on government would seem in order.

Picard and Adams analyzed "the characterization of acts of political violence . . . in the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, and the Washington Post, for the years 1980-85" (1). The characterizations then "were dichotomized into the categories of nominal and descriptive, depending upon their meaning" (1). Nominal characterizations were those perceived to be objective, denotative, and non-judgmental. Descriptive characterizations were those judged to be subjective, connotative, and judgmental.

The study found significant differences in the characterizations offered by media personnel, government officials, and witnesses. Witnesses were exclusively nominal in their characterizations, media personnel were about one-third nominal in theirs, while government officials were mostly descriptive. Surprisingly, 94.3% of the characterizations were those of media personnel, who relied very little on the characterizations offered by witnesses or authorities. A rhetorical scholar would want to hypothesize and then test the causes and effects of such characterizations on the media audience.

Picard has made several rhetorically relevant claims in discussing "The Conundrum of News Coverage of Terrorism." For example, he concludes that terrorists commit violence in order "to force their views onto media outlets and thus obtain a forum in which to expose and explain their causes and their beliefs" (5). I have already taken exception to this assertion on the basis of a rhetorical analysis of terrorism.

Picard also has asserted that "if media report terrorist events soberly and accurately, they can have a stabilizing effect by encouraging public understanding of the context of events." By contrast, "however, when inflammatory words, images, and unsubstantiated information are carried in the rush to coverage, the result is often sensationalism" (8-9). The terms "soberly," "inflammatory," and "sensationalism" cry out for rhetorical definitions since they are used in the context of predicting the effects of symbolic acts on persons. Picard also asserts that media sensationalism and lacks of contextual information, historical understanding, and presentation of relevant social issues lead to a lack of public understanding. This lack of understanding is said to cause the public to "overestimate its frequency and import in the flow of world events. Consequently, a form of siege mentality develops and fear spreads throughout the populace" (10). The lack of a clear operational definition for sensationalism, lack of evidence of public misunderstanding, lack of explanation or evidence for the causal relationship between lack of understanding and the siege mentality, and lack of evidence of the existence of a siege mentality all cry out for study by rhetorical scholars. Picard's own research finding that contextual coverage often is present appears, along with Dowling's finding that fear itself has not been created would appear to contradict Picard's hypothesis (Dowling, "Terrorism and the Media"; Picard, "Stages in Coverage").

Picard's discussion of whether or not providing free media forums for terrorists would reduce terrorism would benefit from the rhetorical analysis I have offered here in criticizing the research of Decker and Rainey (Picard, "The Conundrum" 12). Without any explicit theoretical rationale, Picard also asserts that media interviews with terrorists have "the effect of putting terrorists on an equal footing with government officials" (13). While a rhetorical scholar might find a theoretical reason to expect this influence on the audience, and might proceed to test this hypothesis, s/he would be as interested in exploring how this effect influences the motives and actions of the public and of government officials as they respond to terrorist events.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing suggests that speech communication scholars--at least rhetorical ones--have shown the ability to advance the understanding of terrorism and of terrorism and the media. I believe it also has shown that rhetorical scholars can assist scholars in other disciplines improve their research by adding the rhetorical perspective to the multi- and inter-disciplinary research program into terrorism and the media. Conversely, speech communication scholars could benefit from the insights of other disciplines.

The preview of potential insights is limited because the data and analyses examined here were not collected or reported with an eye toward drawing rhetorical conclusions. If rhetorical scholars worked with these scholars at the time their studies are planned and their data is being collected, more and better rhetorical insights would result.

My own plans are to proceed in researching terrorism by conducting a Burkean analysis which promises to provide further reasons for rejecting the hypothesis that media

coverage, and terrorists' desire for it, are the primary causes of terrorism. Burke's approach to human symbolic behavior suggests that the violence of terrorists serves the indispensable and primary function of human symbolism--the creation of a society in which the members (the terrorists) fulfill their innate needs for Order.

Since even the most cursory explanation of Burke's dramatistic theory of communication would extend this paper by several pages, the promise of this course of research will remain a matter for speculation. I hope, however, that I have made a convincing case for the argument that rhetorical critics need to add their voices to the academic dialogue regarding terrorism and the media, and that rhetorical scholars need to listen to the voices of scholars in all other disciplines who are exploring the same phenomenon.

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